

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

SSC-01 OMB-01 /079 W

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R 161154Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4367

DIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6284

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER RESIGNS

REFS: BEIRUT 5913 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: PRIMIN RASHID SOLH HAS FINALLY ACCEPTED THE INEVIT-
ABLE AND RESIGNED. MANNER OF HIS GOING, HOWEVER, HAS NOT RPT
NOT HELPED TO ASSUAGE BITTER EMOTIONS AND POLITICAL, INTER-CON-
FESSIONAL AND LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS ARISING FROM
RECENT DISTRUBANCES HERE, AND THIS SITUATION IS LIKELY TO COMPLI-
CATE PROCESS OF SELECTING NEW CABINET TO SUCCEED SOLH'S DIS-
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ORGANIZED, FACTION-RIDDEN TEAM. END SUMMARY.

1. PAST WEEK SAW CONTINUING POLITICAL TURMOIL HERE IN WHICH PRIMIN SOLH, DESPITE FURTHER UNRAVELLING OF HIS CABINET THROUGH RESIGNATIONS OF ALL BUT FOUR OF HIS MINISTERS, STROVE DESPERATELY TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF IN OFFICE (EVEN AT COST OF HIS RELATIONS WITH PRES FRANGIE WHO HAD WANTED HIM TO STEP DOWN EARLIER WITHOUT FUSS). HIS EFFORTS PROVING FUTILE, SOLH FINALLY TENDERED DOING SO, HOWEVER, SOLH APPEARED BEFORE PACKED SESSION OF PARLIAMENT TO READ LONG AND TENDENCIOUS STATEMENT IN WHICH HE (A) JUSTIFIED HIS CONDUCT AS PRIMIN, (B) BLAMED PHALANGIST PARTY FOR HAVING JEPARDIZED AND LEBANESE "NATIONAL FORCES" (I.E., LEFTIST AND SUNNI MOSLEM GROUP), AND (C) SUBSCRIBED TO SUNNI AND LEFTIST DEMANDS FOR BASIC CHANGES IN LEBANESE SYSTEM (E.G., GREATER MOSLEM "POWER-SHARING" WITHIN GOL, REORGANIZATION (I.E., DILUTION) OF ARMY HIGH COMMAND, AMENDMENT OF ELECTORAL LAWS, AND FULL LEBANESE SUPPORT FOR PALESTINAIN "ARMED STRUGGLE" COME WHAT MAY).

2. SOLH'S STATEMENT, WHICH CONTAINED SOME PALPABLE DISTORTIONS OF REALITY IN CONNECTION WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON AND PRIMIN'S ROLE IN THEM, EVOKED TUMULTOUS SCENE IN PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, SOLH AVOIDED HAVING TO FACE THIS BY DEPARTING HURRIEDLY FOR PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION TO PRES FRANGIE. LATTER, WE UNDERSTAND, ACCEPTED IT WITH ALACRITY--GIVING SOLH VERBAL DRESSING-DOWN FOR (A) HAVING ACTED AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL WISHES IN DELAYING IT FOR SO LONG AND (B) ALIGNING HIMSELF SO CLEARLY WITH LEFTISTS, PALESTINIANS AND THEIR LOCAL SUPPORTERS IN VENDETTA AGAINST PHALANGE. FRANGIE THEN ORDERED SOLH TO REMAIN AS CARETAKER PRIMIN UNTIL A SUCCESSOR CABINET IS FORMED.

3. COMMENT: IN OUR VIEW, MANNER IN WHICH SOLH CONDUCTED HIMSELF DURING PAST WEEK AND MORE REFLECTS DETERMINATION ON PART OF HIS "SOCIALIST-FEUDALIST" MENTOR, KAMAL JUMBLATT, AND LEFTIST FORCES IN GENERAL NOT ALLOW SOLH AND HIS FEW "LOYAL" MINISTERS TO BE DRIVEN FROM OFFICE BY SWELLING PHALANGIST AND OTHER "RIGHT-WING" (LARGELY CHRISTIAN) OPPOSITION. ACCORDING TO RULES OF TRADITIONAL LEBANESE POLITICAL GAME, SOLH MIGHT HAVE RESIGNED LAST WEEK OR EARLIER (PERHAPS EVEN FOLLOWING MARCH CLASHES IN SIDON) AS RESULT OF HAVING LOST CONFIDENCE

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OF BROAD SEGMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION IN HIS GOVT'S ABILITY TO GOVERN. BY HIS REFUSAL TO PLAY BY THE "RULES", HE AND HIS BACKERS HAVE MANAGED TO EXACERBATE CONFESSIONAL-POLITICAL TENSIONS WITHIN LEBANESE BODY POLITIC AT TIME WHEN LEBANESE SYSTEM IS ALREADY EXPERIENCING UNPRECEDENTEDLY SEVERE STRAINS ARISING FROM DETERIORATING LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP. (FOR EXCELLENT DESCRIPTION OF TENSE ATMOSPHERE WHICH PERSISTS HERE AS RESULT OF THESE UNHAPPY TRENDS,

DEPT SHOULD DIGEST PART I OF USIS BEIRUT 6109 OF MAY 13.) HE
HAS ALSO MADE PRES FRANGIE'S TASK OF FINDING ANOTHER -OBEDI-
ENT" SUNNI MOSLEM TO REPLACE HIM AS PRIMIN MEASURABLY
MORE DIFFICULT.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, CABINET, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, REORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT06284
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750173-0627
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750542/aaaablms.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BEIRUT 5913
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 JUN 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER RESIGNS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, LE, (SULH, RASHID)
To: STATE DIA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006